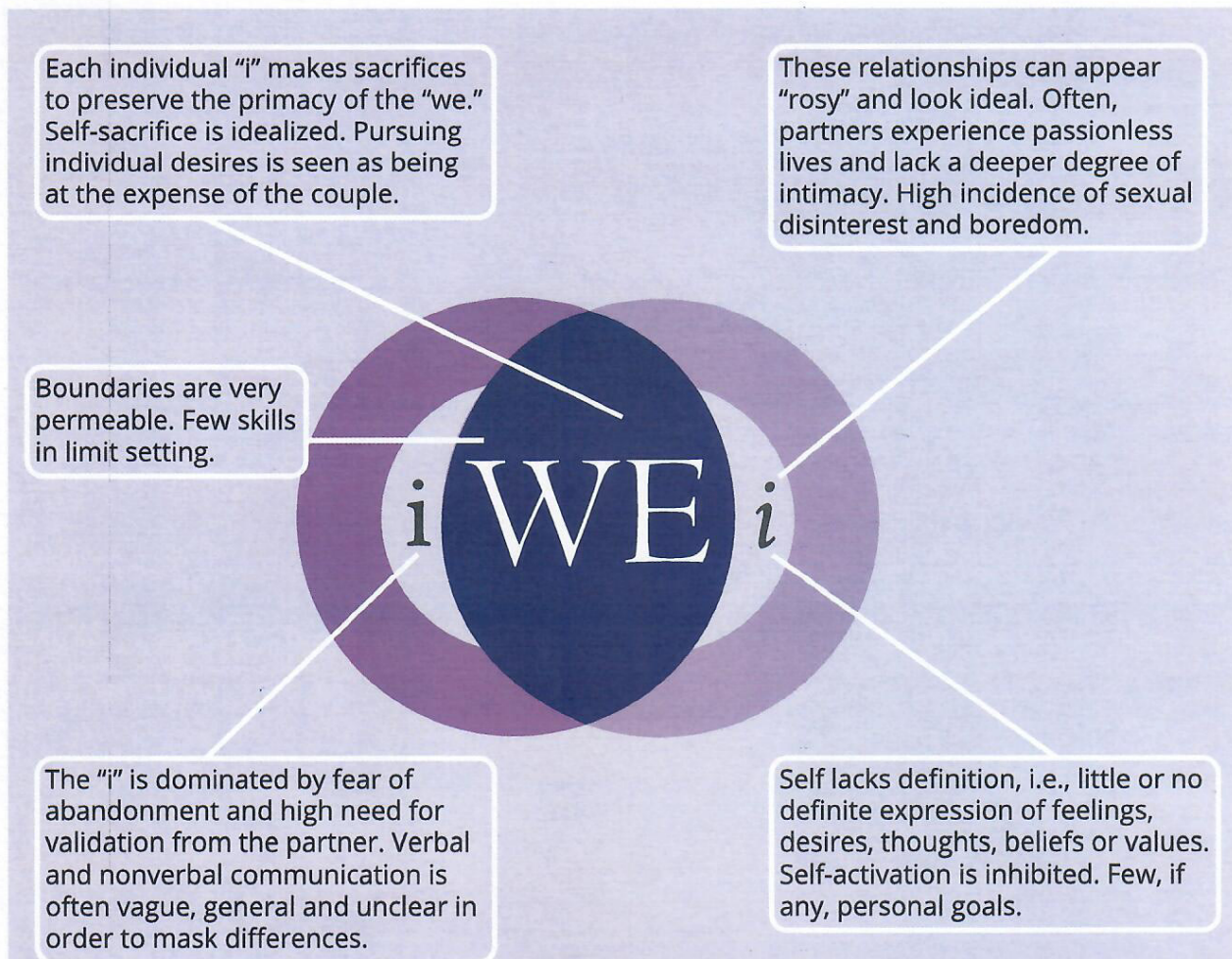


The Conflict Avoidant Relationship



Presentation

Conflict avoidance may present itself along a broad continuum from occasional appearances to an extremely fused, and enmeshed couple. Strong messages in the media, and in the world of pop songs often reinforce and idealize symbiosis. This may present obstacles to recognizing the problems that come from avoiding conflict. Often in our culture, sacrifice and selflessness are idealized, and we are strongly admonished against selfish ways.

Variation

One partner asserts primacy of their needs, while the other willingly accommodates and has low self-definition. Self lacks definition, i.e., little or no expression of feelings, desires, beliefs or values. Self activation is absent. Few, if any, personal goals.

Suggestions

Focus on increasing self-awareness; feelings, thoughts, desires and values. Express these. Practice initiating individual desires. Start with easier issues. Set goals for self. Activate yourself towards these. Take risks. Where there is a history of trauma, child abuse, sexual abuse, or substance abuse, individuals may tend to want to preserve stability and predictability of the emotional environment. This is at the expense of defining yourself in the world. Practice allowing self to experience and tolerate anxiety.